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General debate

Letter dated 20 July 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement prepared by the delegation of Armenia in the exercise of the right of reply to the statement of Azerbaijan delivered at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Conference.

(*Signed*) Garen **Nazarian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 20 July 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement prepared by the delegation of Armenia in the exercise of the right of reply to the statement of Azerbaijan delivered at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

I apologize for taking the floor at this late hour, however the atrocious statement by the representative of Azerbaijan that was strangely devoted mostly to allegations against my country has forced me to do so. The Azerbaijani statement was yet another manifestation of Azerbaijan's hysterical anti-Armenian propaganda, which has become characteristic for each and every international gathering.

The only thing that I would like to say regarding the issue raised about the Metsamor nuclear power plant in Armenia is that it is definitely not Azerbaijan's business to falsely evaluate the safety of the Armenian nuclear power plant. It has been evaluated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and it is functioning with full security guarantees and under constant supervision by international experts. IAEA knows at least a little more than the Azerbaijani Deputy Prime-Minister about the nuclear power safety standards. And believe me, we in Armenia are more interested in the safety of our nuclear power plant.

Now, let me address the last part of Azerbaijan's statement. "Rio+20" is not the forum for discussing Nagorno Karabakh-related issues. They should be resolved in direct talks between the parties. We have gathered here to solve the problems of our planet, but if a neighbouring State cannot live peacefully with its neighbours, it surely cannot contribute to the solution of the worldwide issues.

The harsh reality is simple: Azerbaijan's authorities having declared Armenian people around the world as their only enemy have embarked upon the annihilation of a part of the Armenian populace living in Nagorno Karabakh. We have witnessed a 20-fold rate of growth, unprecedented in the world, of the military budget of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani militaristic stance, adopted at the highest level, poses a real threat to regional security and stability. The financing of such an unprecedented increase in Azerbaijan's military budget is coming from oil, which Azerbaijan is pumping without any respect whatsoever for nature and sustainable development that it was preaching in its statement. The catastrophic results for nature of this greedy oil pumping and the consequences are yet to be thoroughly examined, but there are already many disastrous effects. They are already fully addressed by the Azerbaijani media, however totally neglected by the authorities.

With such statements, Azerbaijan jeopardizes the peace process under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group co-chairs, headed by the Russian Federation, France and the United States of America. Instead of making groundless accusations, it would be much better for the Azerbaijani leadership to accept the Minsk Group proposals. It is Azerbaijan which is refusing the numerous calls for the withdrawal of snipers from the line of contact. The latest incident claimed the life of yet another teenager.

Instead of reminding others about United Nations Security Council resolutions, it would be better if Azerbaijan itself implemented the requirements of

the resolutions that urge "States in the region to refrain from any hostile acts and from any interference or intervention, which would lead to the widening of the conflict and undermine peace and security in the region". Contrary to this, almost every day Azerbaijan carries out provocative actions on the line of contact with the forces of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

Azerbaijan is alleging that Armenia is involved in the destruction of nature, wildlife and cultural property, as well as in causing forest fires. To answer briefly these allegations, I should state that there have been a number of fact-finding and monitoring missions by a number of international organizations, and none of them has ever confirmed those groundless accusations.

How can a delegation speak about the destruction of cultural property by others when Azerbaijan is the number one most barbaric destroyer of cultural heritage, to mention only the annihilation of thousands of medieval Armenian cross-stones and the destruction of a seventh-century Armenian church in Nakhijevan, for no other reason than to wipe out anything Armenian from the areas where Armenians constituted a majority just decades ago. And these Azerbaijani acts are well documented, inter alia with photos and videos, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has been duly notified about these acts of destruction.

I could have addressed other issues from the Azerbaijani statement, however, taking into consideration the absurdity of the allegations and most importantly having respect for the very productive work that we did here in Rio, I will refrain from any further comments.

I request that the present statement in the exercise of the right of reply be included in the report of the Conference.